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New Hazardous Materials Squads Cut Response Time

Today, Secretary of Public Safety and Security Kevin M. Burke, State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Northeast Regional Homeland Security Council Chairman Chief Brian Pattullo presented the region's fire departments with a new hazardous materials squad truck that will be housed at the Danvers Fire Department.

In addition, a new statewide response vehicle that will be part of the state's Hazardous Materials Response Program was also unveiled at the event at the Danvers Fire Headquarters.

"This new vehicle will speed the delivery of detection and analysis abilities to local communities by reducing response time to hazardous materials incidents from under one hour to fewer than thirty minutes," said Secretary Burke. "Early detection is vital to local incident commanders, healthcare providers, and other officials responsible for confirming and defining risks or dispelling concerns of the public," he added.

The hazardous material squad was funded through FY '06 Homeland Security funds through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and through the Northeast Homeland Security Council. Two additional squads are being deployed in Yarmouth and New Bedford with funds from the Southeast Homeland Security Council.

"By strengthening our terrorism reaction capability, we strengthen our non-terrorism response capability. No investment, resulting in true improved preparedness is wasted," said Secretary Burke.

"These new squad vehicles are smaller, lighter and faster but have the same detection capabilities as the technical operations modules units currently deployed in each of the six 'hazmat' regions," said Fire Marshal Coan. "The new statewide truck supports the regional hazmat teams with its advanced detection capabilities and video to assess hazardous or 'hot' environments before we put people in harm's way," he added.

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“Fire Departments provide a key response element in rescue operations, particularly when they respond to chemical, biological, radiological and explosive terrorism incidents,” said Andover Police Chief Brian Pattullo, Chair of the Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council. He added, “This hazardous materials squad truck will enhance the fire service response capabilities throughout the region.”

The Regional Hazardous Materials Response Program is an innovative system designed to provide specialized response of personnel and equipment to the 351 communities of the Commonwealth, to enable them to protect the public, the environment, and property during incidents involving a release or potential release of hazardous materials. Six regional response teams are strategically located for a 30-minute response anywhere in the Commonwealth. The regional teams also support local fire departments with technical information and specialized equipment. The Hazardous Materials Response Program is a division of the state Department of Fire Services.